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RUBAIYAT
OF
OMAR KHAYYAM

Reprinted from

THE FIRST EDITION	...	1859
THE FOURTH EDITION	...	1879



Edward Fitzgerald

❧ RUBAIYÁT ❧

OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

*Rendered into
English Verse by*
EDWARD FITZGERALD

With an Introduction by
DR. S. K. MUKHERJI



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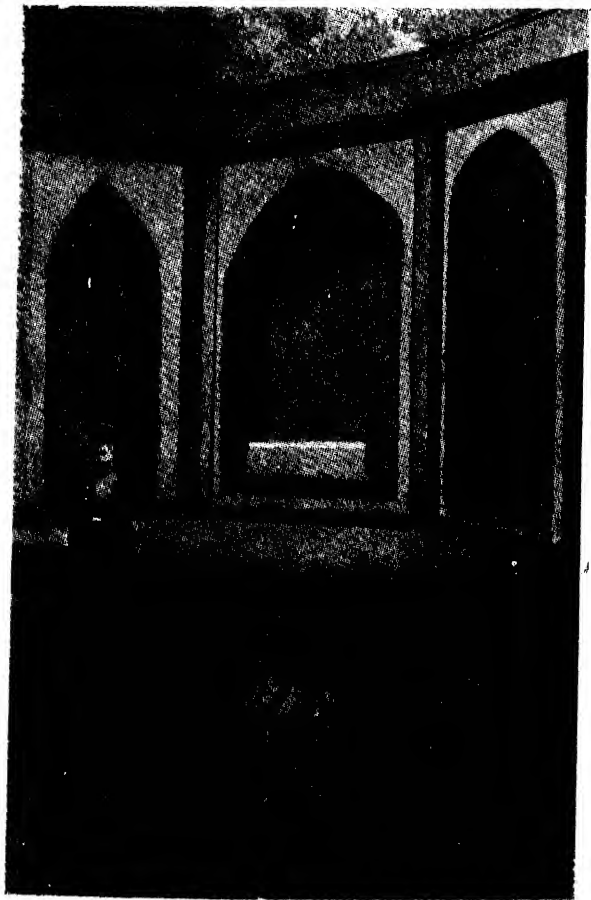
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The Tomb of Omar Khayyam

INTRODUCTION

OMAR KHAYYAM, whose lovely poems have captivated the hearts of the world, was a few years ago unknown even in his own country. It is to Edward Fitzgerald that we owe for the treasure lying in oblivion in the collections of old manuscripts.

THE DISCOVERY OF RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

Fitzgerald was born at Boulge in Suffolk and was a scholar and poet. Professor Cowell, who was a friend of Fitzgerald, introduced him to the poetry of Omar Khayyam. In 1856, he found in the Bodleian Library at Oxford a Persian manuscript, written with purple-black ink profusely powdered with gold. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam was in it and he copied it out for Fitzgerald.

The philosophy of Omar appealed to Fitzgerald who felt a spiritual relationship which bound him to

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the Persian poet. He translated the poems into English. It was, in reality, not a mere translation, but a new poem.

The quatrains in original Persian were not properly arranged. Fitzgerald grouped the scattered thoughts together making omissions or additions where necessary. Like Omar Khayyam, Fitzgerald was a votary of beauty and the joys of life, and yet was aware that 'the flower that once has blown for ever dies'.

Fitzgerald printed only 250 copies of the book and gave almost the whole lot to publisher, Quaritch. He never dreamed that it will one day make him immortal.

It is idle to attempt to apportion the degrees of indebtedness of each to the other as regards the estimation in which the Rubaiyat is held by the modern readers ; for it is almost impossible to think of them except as one.

THE DISCOVERY OF FITZGERALD'S TRANSLATION

Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam was rotting in the

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shelves of booksellers, when it was accidentally discovered by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. One day two friends of Rossetti found in a book-shop a small volume named 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam—the Astronomer-Poet of Persia', published in 1859. The name of the translator was not given and the price was five shillings. They purchased a copy each for only a penny. When Rossetti saw this book, he went through it and was struck by the charm of the poems. He showed it to Swinburne, and the book became well-known within a short time. Swinburne wrote :

"Having read it, Rossetti and I invested upwards of six pence a piece—or possibly three pence.....Next day, we thought we might get some more for presents among our friends, but the man at the stall asked for two pence ! We took a few.....In a week or two, if I am not mistaken, the remaining copies were sold at a guinea."

This was how this great work was saved and became a classic and read and re-read all over the world.

THE GRAVE OF FITZGERALD

Fitzgerald passed a great part of his life at

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Boulge and his grave is marked by a flat granite stone with a memorial which is a homage to Omar and Fitzgerald. There is a rose bush planted at the head of the grave. It was grown from the seeds taken from the rose plants growing close to the tomb of Omar Khayyam at Nishapur.

Simpson, who went to Nishapur in 1884, with the Afghan Boundary Commission, saw tendrils of rose overhanging the poet's resting place, thus fulfilling Omar's desire, that his 'tomb shall be in a place where the north wind will scatter roses on it.' He collected some seeds from this bush and thought that this was the particular kind of roses Omar was so fond of watching as he pondered and composed his verses. He sent them to the publisher of Fitzgerald, who forwarded them to the Royal Botanical Garden at Kew, where plants were grown from them.

Within a few years Fitzgerald's translation became very popular and societies were established to honour the memory of Omar and his equally great translator. There was a proposal to plant "these flowers of Iran, on an English stook" upon the grave of Fitzgerald. A pilgrimage was made

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to the churchyard at Boulge and the rose bushes were planted there. Thus while the rose bushes on the grave of Omar at Nishapur scatter roses on it, the descendants of these plants shower their sweet flowers upon the resting place of him who delivered and interpreted the message of the Persian poet to the English knowing people of the world. These flowers carry the thoughts of the visitor to Nishapur thousands of miles away where the nightingale of Iran lies.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF OMAR KHAYYAM

Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam is now the best known book and the quatrains have become a part of everyday speech. They have a blossoming freshness, radiant vitality and conspicuous originality. Human passions, emotions and sentiments have found their reflection in them. They appeal to men and women, who are restive under the monotony of daily life and struggle for existence. But still the quatrains of Omar Khayyam are not poetry of pleasure. The poet remembers that 'spring should vanish with the rose'.

Behind the cups of wine and woman, the revelry

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and pleasure, and joy throbbing with life, there is an under-current of pessimism. The poems give us the sense of impending twilight of life and the oblivion in death which must arrive sooner or later.

When we read the poems of Omar, we understand them not with the exterior mind, but with the innermost part of our soul. Their appeal is so soul-stirring and charm so exquisite that 'Omar has secured a permanent place amongst the greatest poets of the world, and for ages to come the Rubaiyat will be bequeathed as a noble and precious heritage to the future generations.

THE HOME OF OMAR KHAYYAM

The city, where Omar Khayyam wrote his immortal poems and lies buried, is now a small town in Iran on the main route of traffic to Mashad, the holy city of Iran. The city of Mashad lies only at a distance of a day's journey in a carriage from Nishapur.

Nishapur is a very old town and its name is derived from the Pahlavi designation, Nev-shapur (the word *nev* meaning 'good') or the good city

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of Nishapur. The Sasanian King Shapur I (241-292 A.D.) was the builder or re-builder of this city.

After the destruction of the old city, the modern town was built five hundred years ago. Omar's grave lies about four miles from the present town, in a south easterly direction, just beyond the ruined site of Sadiakh.

The inhabitants of the town are not interested in the great poet adored by the world. He has not the qualities that appeal to Mohamedan orthodoxy ; and his wine-imbibing verses and his freedom of thought in expressing his attitude towards *Khoda* (God) are looked upon as blasphemy.

The city has changed, but the characteristics of the people have remained much the same as they were in the days of Omar.

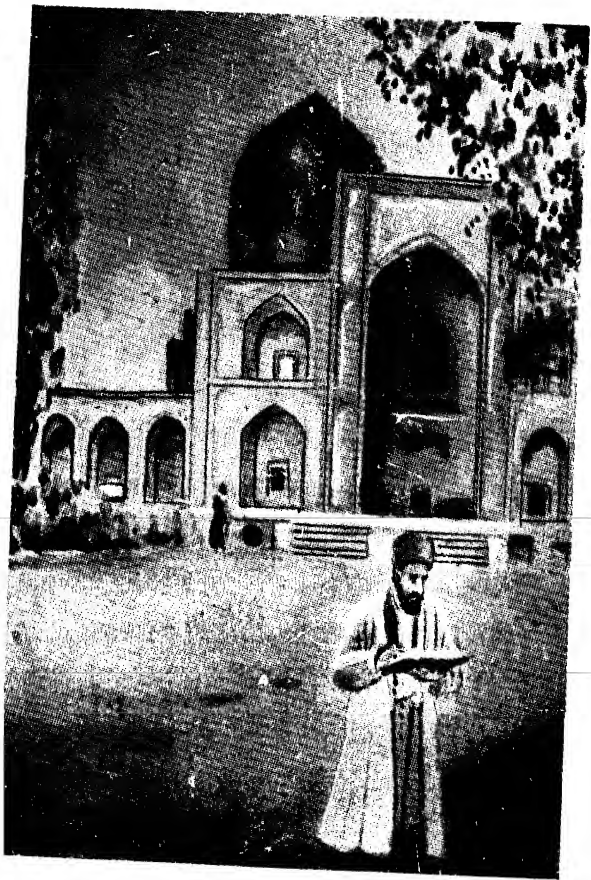
Omar's grave is near the mosque of Mahruk in a garden with shade-trees and flowers. The grave is made of brick and cement with no inscription on it. Beneath this brick case Omar lies in dust, forming no longer one of the company of 'guests star-scattering on the grass'.

Omar is dead, but he lives and will live for-ever in his Rubaiyat.

'Sultan and slave alike have gone their way
With Bahrum Gur, But whither none may say,
Yet he who charmed the wise at Nishapur
Seven centuries since, still charms the wise to-day.'

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Portal at the Entrance of the Garden where Omar lies buried. The Sarcophagus may be seen in the Middle Arch of the left wing.

LIFE OF OMAR KHAYYAM

THE ASTRONOMER-POET OF PERSIA

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OMAR KHAYYAM was born at Nishapur in Khorassan in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth Century. The slender Story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two other very considerable Figures in their Time and Country : one of whom tells the Story of all Three. This was Nizam ul Mulk, Vizyr to Alp Arslan the Son, and Malik Shah the Grandson, of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble Successor of Mahmud the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizam ul Mulk, in his *Wasiyat*, — or *Testament* — which he wrote and left as a Memorial for future Statesmen—relates the following, as quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, No. lix., from Mirkhond's *History of the Assassins*.

Life of Omar Khayyam

“One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassan was the Imam Mowaffak of Nishapur, a man highly honoured and revered—may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious years exceeded eighty-five, and it was the universal belief that every boy who read the Koran or studied the traditions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and happiness. For this cause did my father send me from Tus to Nishapur with Abd-us-samad, the doctor of law, that I might employ myself in study and learning under the guidance of that illustrious teacher. Towards me he ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I passed four years in his service. When I first came there, I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived, Hakim Omar Khayyam, and the ill-fated Ben Sabbah. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imam rose from his lectures, they used to join me, and we repeated to each other the lessons we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Nishapur, while Hasan Ben Sabbah's father

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was one Ali, a man of austere life and practice, but heretical in his creed and doctrine. One day Hasan said to me and to Khayyam, "It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imam Mowaffak will attain to fortune. Now, even if we *all* do not attain thereto, without doubt one of us will ; what then shall be our mutual pledge and bond ?" We answered, "Be it what you please,"—"Well," he said, "let us make a vow, that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for himself."—"Be it so," we both replied, and on those terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassan to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul ; and when I returned, I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslan.'

"He goes on to state, that years passed by ; and both his old school friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the school-day vow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hasan demanded a place in the government, which the Sultan granted

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at the Vizier's request ; but, discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an Oriental Court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings, Hasan became the head of the Persian sect of the *Ismailians*,—a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A.D. 1090, he seized the castle of Alamut, in the province of Rudbar, which lies in the mountainous tract south of the Caspian sea ; and it was from this mountain home he obtained that evil celebrity among the crusaders as the OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world ; and it is yet disputed whether the word *Assassin*, which they have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish*, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bhang*), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of Oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Nishapur. One of the countless

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victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizam ul Mulk himself, the old schoolboy friend.¹

"Omar Khayyam also came to the Vizier to claim his share ; but not to ask for title or office. 'The greatest boon you can confer on me,' he said, 'is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 *mithkals* of gold, from the treasury of Nishapur.

"At Nishapur thus lived and died Omar Khayyam, 'busied,' adds the Vizier, 'in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and obtained great praise for

1 Some of Omar's Rubaiyat warn us of the danger of Greatness, the instability of Fortune, and while advocating Charity to all Men, recommending us to be too intimate with none. Attar makes Nizam ul Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar [Rub. xxviii.], "When Nizam ul Mulk was in the agony (of death) he said, 'Oh God ! I am passing away in the hand of the Wind.'"

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his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him."

"When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the *Jalali* era (so called from *Jalal-ud-din*, one of the king's names)—'a computation of time,' says Gibbon, 'which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style.' He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled "*Ziji-Malikshahi*," and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

"His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyam) signifies a Tentmaker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before Nizam ul Mulk's generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their names from their occupations; thus we have Attar, 'a druggist,' Assar, 'an oil presser,' etc.¹ Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines :

¹ Though all these, like our Smiths, Archers, Millers, Fletchers, etc., may simply retain the Surname of an hereditary calling.

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“ Khayyam, who stitched the tents of science,
Has fallen in grief's furnace and been suddenly
burned ;
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his
life,
And the broker of Hope has sold him for
nothing !’

“ We have only one more anecdote to give of his Life, and that relates to the close ; it is told in the anonymous preface which is sometimes prefixed to his poems ; it has been printed in the Persian in the Appendix to Hyde's *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499 ; and D'Herbelot alludes to it in his *Bibliothèque*, under *Khiam* :—¹

“ It is written in the chronicles of the anciens that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyam, died at Nishapur in the year of the Hegira 517 (A.D. 1123) ; in science he was unrivalled,—the very paragon of his age. Khwajah Nizami of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the follow-

1 “ *Philosophe Musulman qui a vecu en Odeur de Saintete dans sa Religion, vers la Fin du premier et le Commencement du second Siecle,*” no part of which, except the “ *Philosophe,*” can apply to our Khayyam.

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ing story : "I often used to hold conversations with my teacher Omar Khayyam, in a garden ; and one day he said to me, ' My tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words.¹ Years after, when I chanced to revisit Nishapur, I went to his

1 The Rashness of the Words, according to D'Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Koran : "No Man knows where he shall die."—This story of Omar reminds me of another so naturally—and when one remembers how wide of his humble mark the noble sailor aimed—so pathetically told by Captain Cook—not by Doctor Hawkesworth—in his *Second Voyage* (i. 374). When leaving Ulietca, "Oreo's last request was for me to return. When he saw he could not obtain that promise, he asked the name of my *Marai* (burying-place). As strange a question as this was, I hesitated not a moment to tell him 'Stepney'; the parish in which I live when in London. I was made to repeat it several times over till they could pronounce it ; and then 'Stepney Marai no Toote' was echoed through an hundred mouths at once. I afterwards found the same question had been put to Mr. Forster by a man on shore ; but he gave a different, and indeed more proper answer, by saying, 'No man who used the sea could say where he should be buried.' "

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final resting-place, and lo ! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden under them.' "

Thus far—without fear of Trespass—from the *Calcutta Review*. The writer of it, on reading in India this story of Omar's Grave, was reminded, he says, of Cicero's Account of finding Archimedes' Tomb at Syracuse, buried in grass and weeds. I think Thorwaldsen desired to have roses grow over him ; a wish religiously fulfilled for him to the present day, I believe. However, to return to Omar.

Though the Sultan "shower'd Favours upon him," Omar's Epicurean Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country. He is said to have been especially hated and dreaded by the Sufis, whose Practice he ridiculed, and whose Faith amounts to little more than his own, when stript of the Mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism under which Omar would not hide. Their Poets, including Hafiz, who are (with the exception of Firdausi) the most considerable in Persia, borrowed largely,

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indeed, of Omar's material, but turning it to a mystical Use more convenient to Themselves and the People they addressed ; a People quite as quick of Doubt as of Belief ; as keen of Bodily Sense as of Intellectual ; and delighting in a cloudy composition of both, in which they could float luxuriously between Heaven and Earth, and this World and the Next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either. Omar was too honest of Heart as of well as Head for this. Having failed (however mistakenly) of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but This, he set about making the most of it ; preferring rather to soothe the Soul through the Senses into Acquiescence with Things as he saw them, than to perplex it with vain disquietude after what they *might* be. It has been seen, however, that his Worldly Ambition was not exorbitant ; and he very likely takes humorous or perverse pleasure in exalting the gratification of Sense above that of the Intellect, in which he must have taken great delight, although it failed to answer the Questions in which he, in common with all men, was most vitally interested.

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For whatever Reason, however, Omar, as before said, has never been popular in his own Country, and therefore has been but scantily transmitted abroad. The MSS. of his Poems, mutilated beyond the average Casualties of Oriental Transcription, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reached Westward at all, in spite of all the acquisitions of Arms and Science. There is no copy at the India House, none at the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris. We know but of one in England : No. 140 of the Ousely MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiraz, A.D. 1460. This contains but 158 Rubaiyat. One in the Asiatic Society's Library at Calcutta (of which we have a Copy) contains (and yet incomplete) 516, though swelled to that by all kinds of Repetition and Corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of *his* Copy as containing about 200, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at double that number.¹ The scribes, too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS. seem to do their Work

1 "Since this Paper was written" (adds the Reviewer in a note), "we have met with a Copy of a very rare Edition, printed at Calcutta in 1836. This contains 438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS."

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under a sort of Protest ; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not), taken out of its alphabetical order ; the Oxford with one of Apology ; the Calcutta with one of Expostulation, supposed (says a Notice prefixed to the MS.) to have arisen from a Dream, in which Omar's mother asked about his future fate. It may be rendered thus—

“ Oh Thou who burn'st in Heart for those who burn

In Hell, whose fires thyself shall feed in turn ;

How long be crying, ‘ Mercy on them, God ! ’

Why, who art Thou to teach, and He to learn ? ”

The Bodleian Quatrain pleads Pantheism by way of Justification.

“ If I myself upon a looser Creed

Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good deed,

Let this one thing for my Atonement plead :

‘ That One for two I never did mis-read. ’

The Reviewer,¹ to whom I owe the Particulars of Omar's life, concludes his Review by comparing him with Lucretius, both as to natural Temper and Genius, and as acted upon by the Circumstances in which he lived. Both indeed

1 Professor Cowell.

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were men of subtle, strong, and cultivated Intellect, fine Imagination, and Hearts passionate for Truth and Justice ; who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false. or foolish, Devotion to it ; but who fell short of replacing what they subverted by such better *Hope* as others, with no better Revelation to guide them, had yet made a Law to themselves. Lucretius, indeed, with such material as Epicurus furnished, satisfied himself with the theory of a vast machine fortuitously constructed, and acting by a Law that implied no Legislator ; and so composing himself into a Stoical rather than Epicurean severity of Attitude, sat down to contemplate the mechanical Drama of the Universe which he was part Actor in ; himself and all about him (as in his own sublime description of the Roman Theatre) discoloured with the lurid reflex of the Curtain suspended between the Spectator and the Sun. Omar, more desperate, or more careless of any so complicated System as resulted in nothing but hopeless Necessity, flung his own Genius and Learning with a bitter or humorous jest into the general Ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to

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reveal ; and, pretending sensual pleasure as the serious purpose of Life, only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last ! 80326

With regard to the present Translation. The original Rubaiyat (as, missing an Arabic Guttural, these *Tetrastichs* are more musically called) are independent Stanzas, consisting each of four Lines of equal, though varied, Prosody ; sometimes *all* rhyming, but oftener (as here imitated) the third line a blank. Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last. As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubaiyat follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme—a strange succession of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the “Drink and make-merry,” which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original. Either way, the Result is sad enough : saddest perhaps when most ostentatiously merry :

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more apt to move Sorrow than Anger toward the old Tentmaker, who, after vainly endeavouring to unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of TO-MORROW, fell back upon TO-DAY (which has outlasted so many To-morrows !) as the only Ground he had got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITON

While the second Edition of this version of Omar was preparing, Monsieur Nicolas, French Consul at Resht, published a very careful and very good Edition of the Text, from a lithograph copy at Teheran, comprising 464 Rubaiyat, with translation and notes of his own.

Mons. Nicolas, whose Edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material Epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a Mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of Wine, Wine-bearer, etc., as Hafiz is supposed

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to do ; in short, a Sufi Poet like Hafiz and the rest.

I cannot see reason to alter my opinion, formed as it was more than a dozen years ago when Omar was first shown me by one to whom I am indebted for all I know of Oriental, and very much of other literature. He admired Omar's Genius so much, that he would gladly have adopted any such interpretation of his meaning as Mons. Nicolas' if he could.¹ That he could not, appears by his Paper in the *Calcutta Review* already so largely quoted ; in which he argues from the Poems themselves, as well as from what records remain of the Poet's Life.

And if more were needed to disprove Mons. Nicolas' Theory, there is the Biographical Notice which he himself has drawn up in direct contradiction to the Interpretation of the Poems given in his Notes. (See pp. xiii xiv. of his Preface.) Indeed I hardly knew poor Omar was so far gone till his Apologist informed me. For here we see

1. Perhaps would have edited the Poems himself some years ago. He may now as little approve of my Version on one side, as of Mons. Nicolas' Theory on the other.

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that, whatever were the Wine that Hafiz drank and sang, the veritable Juice of the Grape it was which Omar used, not only when carousing with his friends, but (says Mons. Nicholas) in order to excite himself to that pitch of Devotion which others reached by cries and "hurlemens." And yet, whenever Wine, Wine-bearer, etc., occur in the text—which is often enough—Mons. Nicholas carefully annotates "Dieu," "La Divinite," etc. . so carefully indeed that one is tempted to think that he was indoctrinated by the Sufi with whom we read the Poems. (Note to Rub. II. p. 8.) A Persian would naturally wish to vindicate a distinguished Countryman : and a Sufi to enrol him in his own sect, which already comprises all the chief poets in Persia.

What historical Authority has Mons. Nicolas to show that Omar gave himself up "*avec passion a l'etude de la philosophie des Soufis*" ? (Preface, p. xiii) The Doctrines of Pantheism, Materialism, Necessity, etc., were not peculiar to the Sufi ; nor to Lucretius before them ; nor to Epicurus before him ; probably the very original Irreligion of Thinking men from the first ; and

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very likely to be the spontaneous growth of a Philosopher living in an Age of social and political barbarism, under shadow of one of the Two-and-Seventy Religions supposed to divide the world. Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) speaks of Omar as "a Freethinker, and a *great opponent of Sufism*"; perhaps because, while holding much of their Doctrine, he would not pretend to any inconsistent severity of morals. Sir W. Ouseley has written a note to something of the same effect on the fly-leaf of the Bodleian MS. And in two Rubaiyat of Mons. Nicolas' own Edition Suf and Sufi are both disparagingly named.

No doubt many of these Quatrains seem unaccountable unless mystically interpreted; but many more as unaccountable unless literally. Were the Wine spiritual, for instance, how wash the body with it when dead? Why make cups of the dead clay to be filled with—"La Divinite"—by some succeeding Mystic? Mons. Nicholas himself is puzzled by some "bizarres" and "trop Orientales" allusions and images—"d'une sen-

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sualite quelquefois revoltante" indeed—which "les convenances" do not permit him to translate; but still which the reader cannot but refer to "La Divinite."¹ No doubt also many of the Quatrains in the Teheran, as in the Calcutta, Copies, are spurious; such *Rubaiyat* being the common form of Epigram in Persia. But this, at best, tells as much one way as another; nay, the Sufi, who may be considered the Scholar and Man of Letters in Persia, would be far more likely than the careless Epicure to interpolate what favours his own view of the Poet. I observe that

I A Note to Quatrain 234 admits that, however clear the mystical meaning of such Images must be to Europeans, they are not quoted without "rougissant" even by laymen in Persia—"Quant aux termes de tendresse qui commencent ce quatrain, comme tant d'autres dans ce recueil, nos lecteurs, habitues maintenant a l'etrangete des expressions si souvent employees par Kheyam pour rendre ses pensees sur l'amour divin, et a la singularite de ses images trop orientales, d'une sensualite quelquefois revoltante, n'auront pas de peine a se persuader qu'il s'agit de la Divinite, bien que cette conviction soit vivement discutee par les moullahs musulmans et meme par beaucoup de laiques, qui rougissent veritablement d'une pareille licence de leur compatriote a l'egard des choses spirituelles."

Omar Khayyam

very few of the more mystical Quatrains are in the Bodleian MS. which must be one of the oldest, as dated at Shiraz, A.H. 865, A.D. 1460. And this, I think, especially distinguishes Omar (I cannot help calling him by his—no, not Christian—familiar name) from all other Persian Poets : That, whereas with them the Poet is lost in his Song, the Man in Allegory and Abstraction ; we seem to have the Man—the *Bonhomme*—Omar himself, with all his Humours and Passions, as frankly before us as if we were really at Table with him, after the Wine had gone round.

I must say that I, for one, never wholly believed in the Mysticism of Hafiz. It does not appear there was any danger in holding and singing Sufi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his Salaam to Mohammed at the beginning and end of his Song. Under such conditions Jelaluddin, Jami, Attar, and others sang ; using Wine and Beauty indeed as Images to illustrate, not as a Mask to hide, the Divinity they were celebrating. Perhaps some Allegory less liable to mistake or abuse had been better among so inflammable a People :

Edward Fitzgerald

much more so when, as some think with Hafiz and Omar, the abstract is not only likened to, but identified with the sensual Image ; hazardous, if not to the Devotee himself, yet to his weaker Brethren ; and worse for the Profane in proportion as the Devotion of the Initiated grew warmer. And all for what ? To be tantalized with Images of sensual enjoyment which must be renounced if one would approximate a God, who according to the Doctrine, *is* Sensual Matter as well as Spirit, and into whose Universe one expects unconsciously to merge after Death, without hope of any posthumous Beatitude in another world to compensate for all one's self-denial in this. Lucretius' blind Divinity certainly merited, and probably got as much self-sacrifice as this of the Sufi ; and the burden of Omar's Song—if not "Let us eat"—is assuredly—"Let us drink, for To-morrow we die !" And if Hafiz meant quite otherwise by a similar language, he surely miscalculated when he devoted his Life and Genius to so equivocal a Psalmody as, from his Day to this, has been said and sung by any rather than Spiritual Worshippers.

Omar Khayyam

However, as there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men in favour of Omar's being a Sufi—and even something of a Saint—those who please may so interpret his Wine and Cup-bearer. On the other hand, as there is far more historical certainty of his being a Philosopher, of scientific Insight and Ability far beyond that of the Age and Country he lived in ; of such moderate worldly Ambition as becomes a Philosopher, and such moderate wants as rarely satisfy a Debauchee ; other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the Wine Omar celebrates is simply the Juice of the Grape, he bragged more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.

EDWARD FITZGERALD



Wake ! For the Sun, who scattered into flight

Quatrain I. Ed. IV

RUBAIYAT OF
OMAR KHAYYAM

FOURTH EDITION
1879

1

WAKE ! For the Sun, who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Di's Night along with them from Heav'n, and
strikes
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

2

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside ?"

Omar Khayyām

3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door !

You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

4

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,

Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

5

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one
knows ;

But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the water blows.

Omar Khayyām

6

And David's lips are lockt ; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine ! Wine ! Wine !
Red Wine !" — the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to' incarnadine.

7

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling :
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing

8

Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

Omar Khayyam

9

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say ;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday ?

And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away.

10

Well, let it take them ! What have we to do
With Kaikobad the Great, or Kaikhosru ?

Let Zal and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hatim call to Supper—heed not you.

11

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultan is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmud on his golden Throne ?



Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring

Omar Khayyam

12

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow !

13

Some for the Glories of This World ; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come ;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum !

14

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow.
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

43

Omar Khayyám

15

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

16

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

17

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his destined hour, and went his way.

Omar Khayyām

18

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep
And Bahram, the great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep

19

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

20

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !

45

Omar Khayyám

21

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
TO-DAY of past Regrets and Future Fears :
To-morrow !—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

22

For some we Loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

23

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom ?

Omar Khayyám

24

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend ;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End !

25

Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare,
And those that after some TO-MORROW stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries,
“Fools ! your Reward is neither Here nor There.”

26

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth ; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

47

Omar Khayyam

27

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about : but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

28

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

29

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing ;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

48

Omar Khayyám

30

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence* ?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence !
Oh, many a cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence !

31

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate ;
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road ;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

32

There was the Door to which I found no Key :
There was the Veil through which I might not see :
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

49

Omar Khayyám

33

Earth could not answer ; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn ;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

34

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A Lamp amid the Darkness ; and I heard,
As from Without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND !

35

Then to the lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn :
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink !—for, once dead, you never shall return."

50



A Book of Verse underneath the Bow

Omar Khayyam

36

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink ; and Ah ! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take - and give !

37

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay :
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray !"

38

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a cold of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into human mould ?

51

Omar Khayyam

39

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Angnish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

40

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

41

Perplexed no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

52

Omar Khayyám

42

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes ;
Think then you are To-DAY what YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.

43

So when that Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink

44

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide ?

53

Omar Khayyám

45

Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest ;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrash
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

46

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more ;
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

47

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

54

Omar Khayyām

48

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo !—the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste !

49

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About THE SECRET—quick about it, Friend !
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, may life depend ?

50

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True ;
Yes ; and a single Alif were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too ;

55

Omar Khayyám

51

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains ;
Taking all shapes from Mah to Mahi ; and
They change and perish all—but He remains ;

52

moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

53

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, add up to Heav'ns unopening Door,
You gaze TO-DAY, while You are You—how then
TO-MORROW, when You shall be You no more ?

56

Omar Khayyām

54

Waste not your hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute ;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

55

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house ;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

56

For "Is" and "IS-NOT" though with Rule and Line
And "Up-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

57

Omar Khayyām

57

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning ?—Nay,
’Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

58

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a vessel on his shoulder ; and
He bid me taste of it ; and ’twas—the Grape !

59

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute :
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life’s leaden metal into Gold transmute :

58



And if the Wine we drink, the lip we press

Quatrain XLII. E. d. IV.

Omar Khayyam

60

The mighty Mahmud, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

61

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blasphe-me the twisted tendril as a Snare ?
A Blessing, we should use it, should we not ?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there ?

62

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust !

59

Omar Khayyam

63

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies ;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies ;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

64

Strange, is it not ? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of **Darkness** through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

65

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

60

Omar Khayyám

66

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-line to spell :
And by and by Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell :"

67

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

68

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show ;

61

Omar Khayyam

69

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days ;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

70

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes ;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows !

71

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

62

Omar Khayyām

72

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hads to *It* for help—for *It*
As impotently moves as you or I.

73

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed :
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

74

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare ;
TO-MORROW'S Silence, Triumph, or Despair :
Drink ! for you know not whence you came
nor why :
Drink ! for you know not why you go, nor where.

63

Omar Khayyám

75

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtari they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

76

The Vine had struck a fibre : which about
If clings my being—let the Dervish flout ;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

77

And this I know : whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

64

Omar Khayyám

78

What ! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke !

79

What ! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade !

80

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin !

65

Omar Khayyām

81

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake :

For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take.

82

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramzan away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

83

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall ;
And some loquacious Vessels were ; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

66



Ah, my Beloved fill the Cup that clears
Quatrain XXI. Ed. IV

Omar Khayyam

84

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

85

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in
joy ;
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

86

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make ;
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry :
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter shake ?"

67

Omar Khayyám

87

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Sufi pipkin—waxing hot—

“All this of pot and potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot ?”

88

“Why,” said another, “Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell

The luckless Pots he marr’d in making—Pish !
He’s a Good Fellow, and ’t will all be well.”

89

“Well”, murmur’d one, “Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry :

But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by.”

68

Omar Khayyám

90

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking :
And then they jogg'd each other, .Brother !
Brother !
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking !"

* * *

91

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

92

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

69

Omar Khayyām

93

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong :
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

94

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore ?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in
hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

95

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

70

Omar Khayyám

96

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose !
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should
close !

The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows !

97

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field !

98

Would but some winged Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate !

71

Omar Khayyam

99

Ah Love ! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !

* * *

100

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane ;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain !

101

And when like her, Oh Saki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatt'r'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass !

TAMAM

RUBAIYAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM

FIRST EDITION : 1859

(The difference in translation of Rubaiyat between the First and subsequent editions is so much, that it is thought better to print it in full.)

I

AWAKE ! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight :
And Lo ! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

2

Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."

3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door !
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

Omar Khayyām

4

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.

5

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one
knows ;
But still the Vine her ancient Ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.

6

And David's Lips are lock't ; but in divine
High piping Pehlevi, with " Wine ! Wine ! Wine !
Red Wine !"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That yellow Cheek of her's to incarnadine.



And the delightful Herb whose Tender Green

Omar Khayyam

7

Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling :
The Bird of time has but a little way
To fly—and Lo ! the Bird is on the Wing.

8

And look—a thousand Blossoms with the Day
Woke—and a thousand scatter'd into Clay :
And this first Summer Month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away

9

But come with old Khayyam, and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot :
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hatim Tai cry Supper—heed them not.

Omar Khayyám

10

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known,
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne.

11

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

12

“How sweet is mortal Sovranty!”—think some :
Others—“How blest the Paradise to come !”
Ah, take the Cash in hand and waive the Rest ;
Oh, the brave Music of a *distant* Drum !

Omar Khayyām

13

Look to the Rose that blows about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow :
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

14

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers ; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two—is gone.

15

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,
And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

77

Omar Khayyám

16

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two, and went his way.

17

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank
deep ;
And Bahram, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, and he lies fast asleep.

18

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled ;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.

78

Omar Khayyam

19

And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean—

Ah, lean upon it lightly ! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen !

20

Ah, my Beloved, fill the cup that clears
TO-DAY of past Regrets and future Fears—

To-morrow ?—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.

21

Lo ! some we loved, the loveliest and best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest.

79

Omar Khayyam

22

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch—for whom ?

23

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend ;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans
End !

24

Alike for those who for To-DAY prepare,
And those that after To-MORROW stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of darkness cries
“Fools ! your Reward is neither Here nor There !”

Omar Khayyám

25

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets Forth ; their Words to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with
Dust.

26

Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise
To talk ; one thing is certain, that Life flies ;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies ;
The flower that once has blown for ever dies.

27

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about : but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.

81

Omar Khayyám

28

With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand labour'd it to grow :
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

29

Into this Universe, and *why* not knowing,
Nor *whence*, like water willy-nilly flowing :
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

30

What, without asking, hither hurried *whence* ?
And, without asking, *whither* hurried hence !
Another and another Cup to drown
The Memory of this Impertinence !

82

Omar Khayyám

31

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road ;
But not the knot of Human Death and Fate.

32

There was a Door to which I found no Key :
There was a Veil past which I could not see :
Some little Talk awhile of ME and THEE
There seem'd—and then no more of THEE and ME.

33

Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,
Asking "What Lamp had Destiny to guide
Her little children stumbling in the Dark ?"
And—"A blind Understanding !" Heav'n replied.

83

Omar Khayyám

34

Then to this earthen Bowl did I adjourn
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn :
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live
Drink ! for once dead you never shall return."

35

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And merry-make ; and the cold Lip I Kiss'd
How many Kisses might it take—and give !

36

For in the Market-place, one Dusk of Day,
I watch'd the Potter thumping his wet Clay :
And with its all obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray !"

Omar Khayyám

37

Ah, fill the Cup :—what boots it to repeat
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet :
Unborn To-MORROW, and dead YESTERDAY,
Why fret about them if TO-DAY be sweet !

38

One Moment in Annihilation's Waste,
One Moment, of the Well of Life to taste—
The Stars are setting and the Caravan
Starts for the Dawn of Nothing—Oh, make haste !

39

How long, how long, in infinite Pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute ?
Better be merry with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

85

Omar Khayyám

40

You know, my Friends, how long since in my
House

For a new Marriage I did make Carouse :
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

41

For "IS" and "IS-NOT" though *with* Rule and Line
And "UP-AND-DOWN" *without*, I could define,
I yet in all I only cared to know,
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

42

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came stealing through the Dusk an Angel Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder ; and
He bid me taste of it ; and 'twas—the Grape !

Omar Khayyam

43

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute :
The subtle Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute.

44

The mighty Mahmud, the victorious Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters and slays with his enchanted Sword.

45

But leave the Wise to wrangle, and with me
The Quarrel of the Universe let be :
And, in some corner of the Hubbub coucht,
Make Game of that which makes as much of Thee.

Omar Khayyam

46

For in and out, above, about, below,
'Tis nothing but a Magic Shadow-show,
Play'd in a Box whose Candle is the Sun,
Round which we Phantom Figures come and go.

47

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in the Nothing all Things end in—Yes—
Then fancy while Thou art, Thou art but what
Thou shalt be—Nothing—Thou shalt not be less.

48

While the Rose blows along the River Brink,
With old Khayyam the Ruby Vintage drink :
And when the Angel with his darker Draught
Draws up to Thee—take that, and do not shrink.

88

Omar Khayyám

49

'Tis all a Chequer-board of Nights and Days
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays :
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

50

The Ball no Question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes ;
And He that toss'd Thee down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows !

51

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

89

Omar Khayyam

52

And that inverted Bowl we call The Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop't we live and die.

Lift not thy hands to *It* for help—for *It*
Rolls impotently moves on as Thou or I.

53

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man's
knead,

And then of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed :

Yea, the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

54

I tell Thee this—When, starting from the Goal,
Over the shoulders of the flaming Foal

Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtara they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul.

Omar Khayyām

55

The Vine had struck a Fibre ; which about
If clings my Being—let the Sufi flout ;
Of my Base Metal may be field a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without,

56

And this I know : whether the one True Light,
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One glimpse of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

57

Oh Thou, who didst with Pitfall and with Gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestination round
Enmesh me, and impute my Fall to Sin ?

Omar Khayyám

58

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And who with Eden didst devise the Snake ;
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's Forgiveness give—and take !

* * *

KUZA-NAMA

59

Listen again. One evening at the Close
Of Ramzan, ere the better Moon arose,
In that old Potter's Shop I stood alone
With the clay Population round in Rows.

60

And, strange to tell, among the Earthen Lot
Some could articulate, while others not :
And suddenly one more impatient cried—
"Who *is* the Potter, pray, and who the Pot ?"

92

Omar Khayyām

61

'Then said another—"Surely not in vain
My Substance from the common Earth was ta'en,
That He who subtly wrought me into Shape
Should stamp me back to common Earth again."

62

Another said—"Why, ne'er a peevish Boy,
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in
Joy ;
Shall He that *maile* the Vessel in pure Love
And Fancy, in an after Rage destroy !"

63

None answer'd this ; but after Silence spake
A Vessel of a more ungainly Make :
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry ;
What ! did the Hand then of the Potter shake ?"

93

Omar Khayyām

64

Said one—"Folks of a surely Tapster tell,
And daub his Visage with the Smoke of Hell ;
They talk of some strict Testing of us—Pish !
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

65

Then said another with a long-drawn Sigh,
"My Clay with a long oblivion is gone dry :
But, fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by-and-bye !"

66

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
One spied the little Crescent all were seeking :
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother
Brother !
Hark to the Porter's Shoulder-knot a-creaking !"

*

*

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Omar Khayyām

67

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash my Body whence the Life has died,
And in a Windingsheet of Vine-leaf wrapt,
So bury me by some sweet Garden-side.

68

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a Snare
Of Perfume shall fling up into the Air.

As not a True Believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

69

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong
Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

95

Omar Khayyām

70

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore ?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

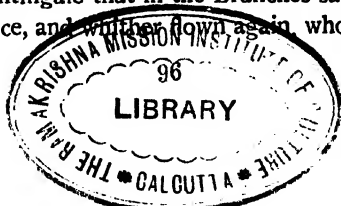
71

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—well,
I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the Goods they sell.

72

Alas, that Spring should vanish with the Rose !
That Youth's sweet-scented Manuscript should
close !

The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows !



Omar Khayyām

73

Ah Love ! could thou and I with Fate conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire !

74

Ah, Moon of my Delight who know'st no wane,
The Moon of Heav'n is rising once again :
How oft hereafter rising shall she look
Through this same Garden after me—in vain !

75

And when Thyself with shining Foot shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made one—turn down an empty Glass !

TAMAM SHUD

97

QUATRAINS WHICH APPEAR IN
SECOND EDITION ONLY

14

Were it not Folly, Spider-like to spin
The Thread of present Life away to win—
What ? for ourselves, who know not if we shall
Breathe out the very Breath we now breathe in !

23

Another Voice, when I am sleeping, cries,
"The Flower should open with the Morning skies."
And a retreating Whisper, as I wake—
"The Flower that once has blown for ever dies'.

44

Do you, within your little hour of Grace,
The waving Cypress in your Arms enlance,
Before the Mother back into her arms
Fold, and dissolve you in a last embrace.

65

If but the Vine and Love-abjuring Band
Are in the Prophet's Paradise to stand,
Alack, I doubt the Prophet's Paradise
Were empty as the hollow of one's Hand.

For let Philosopher and Doctor preach
 Of what they will, and what they will not—each
 Is but one Link in an eternal Chain
 That can slip, nor break, nor over-reach.

Nay, but, for terror of his wrathful Face,
 I swear I will not call Injustice Grace,
 Not one Good Fellow of the Tavern but
 Would kick so poor a Coward from the place.

And once again there gather'd a scarce heard
 Whisper among them ; as it were, the stirr'd
 Ashes of some all but extinguisht Tongue,
 Which mine ear kindled into living Word.

Whither resorting from the vernal Heat
 Shall old Acquaintance Old Acquaintance great,
 Under the Branch that leans above the Wall
 To shed his Blossom over head and feet.

Better, oh better, cancel from the Scroll
 Of Universe one luckless Human Soul,
 Than drop by drop enlarge the Flood that rolls
 Hoarser with Anguish as the Ages Roll.

NOTES TO THE FOURTH EDITION

(Stanza 2) **False morning**—Twilight ; a temporary light on the horizon at day-break before the true dawn (Sanskrit—Pradosha, Persian—Subhi Kazib).

(4) **New year**—In ancient Iran the New year began with the vernal equinox in March when the time of night and day becomes equal. On that day *Nw Roz* or New Year's Day was celebrated. The Solar year, which was observed in ancient Iran, has however now been replaced by the Lunar year.

The White Hand of Moses—The reference is to exodus iv 6 in the Bible where Moses draws forth his hand which was white.

Jesus.....suspairs—It is thought that the healing power of Jesus Christ resided in his breath.

(5) **Iram**—An ancient town famous for its roses which lies buried in the sands of Arabia.

Jamshyd—Jamshyd was a famous king of the mythical Peshdadian dynasty and is said to be the founder of the city of Persepolis, the ancient capital of Iran.

Seven-ringed cup—was the divining cup of Jamshyd.

(6) **Pehlevi**—the classical language of the Parsis in ancient Iran and allied to Sanskrit. The religious works of the Parsis, who took refuge in India after the conquest of Iran by the Mohamedan hordes from Arabia (624-32 A. D.) are written in this language.

In divine.....Nightingale—The poet thinks that though the language of the people of Iran has changed, the Nightingale still sings in Pehlevi.

Nightingale...to incarnadine.—The Nightingale cries to the Rose to make her pale petals red.

(8) **Nishapur**.—It is a small town in Iran on the road to Mashad and is the place where Omar Khayyam lived.

(9) **Babylon**—a famous ancient city (4000 B. C.) the ruins of which have been found in Irak.

Kaikobad—A famous king of ancient Iran whose exploits are described in the Shah-Nama.

(10) **Kaikhosru**.—A king of ancient Iran.

Zai—was the father of Rustum.

Rustum—the 'Hercules' of Iran, was a great hero whose son was the famous Sohrab. The story of Sohrab and Rustum is still very popular.

Hatim Tai—There are many stories of the fabulous generosity of this Bedouin chief.

(11) **Mahmud**—the king of Ghazni (in Afghanistan) who invaded and plundered India (1005 A. D.).

(13) **The rumble of a distant Drum**—The sound of a drum beaten outside a palace.

(14) **Tassel**—a bunch of silk. **The silken.....purse**—that is, the central part of the rose.

(18) **Bahram**—Bahram Gur (Bahram of the Wild Ass) was a Sassanian King, the hero of a famous poem by Amir Khusraw. It is said that Bahram sank in a swamp while pursuing an Ass.

(19) **Never blows.....Cæsar bled**—There is a popular superstition that roses which grow in places where blood has been split become very red.

(31) **Saturn**—was thought to be the Lord of the Seventh Heaven.

(39) **A drop.....we throw**—There was a custom of throwing a little wine on the ground before drinking and was probably a libation to Mother Earth. Omar thinks that this wine is not lost but sinks into the earth and quenches the thirst of mortal remains of some person lying in grave.

(45) **Ferrash**—carpet ; but here it means the man who arranges it. (46) **Saki**—a bearer of wine-cup.

(51) **From Mah to Mahi**.—from fish to moon.

(56) In this stanza Omar makes jest at his Mathematical studies.

(57) This stanza refers to the part taken by the poet in the reform of the calendar at the invitation of Sultan Malik Shah of Merv. It led to the establishment of the Jalali era, which was an improvement on the old one.

(58) **The two and seventy jarring sects**—refers to seventy two different religious systems which divide the world and give rise to quarrel.

(60) The reference is to the conquests and raids of Mahmud the Sultan of Ghazni.

(68) **A moving row.....Lantern**—'Fanusi Khiyal' is a type of lantern with a lighted candle inside. Its cylindrical interior is painted with various figures and is so fitted that it revolves round the candle.

(75) **Parwin and Mushtari**—the Pleiads and Jupiter.

(87) **Sufi**—A religious sect which believes that God may be attained through love.

Pot and Potter—Man is the 'pot' made by the 'potter' the Creator. Compare 'Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?' (Rom. ix, 21).

(90) **The little Moon looked in that all were seeking**—The Mohamedans observe fast in the ninth month of the lunar year (Ramzan). The period of fast ends with the first sight of the new moon which rules the division of the Mohamedan year, and the Mohamedans look eagerly for it.

The Porter's.....creaking—The Porter's knot is heard toward the cellar.

(101) **Tamam**—Everything.

Tamam Sudh—Everything finished.

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